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White Sands National Monument

Historic Residences Rehabilitation Fact Sheet

Background:

Between 1937 and 1939 the WPA built structures at White Sands National Monument to house park staff and serve visitors. The buildings, now more than 60-years-old, were added to the National Register in 1988 as were many other WPA-era buildings in the region. In all nearly 79,000 properties are listed nationwide on the National Register. Authorized by Congress in 1966, the National Register is the nation's official list of significant historic or archeological resources. The WPA-built residences, along with the visitor center and maintenance buildings at the park are also part of the White Sands Historic District.

In October 2000, park residents were moved out of three of the historic adobe residences at White Sands National Monument because of the presence of rodents in the latillas above the living space. The action was prompted as a result of a US Public Health Service inspection and recommendation. Monument and Public Health officials feared the rodents carried the deadly Hantavirus.

The structures at White Sands National Monument have had periodic minor repairs over the years but have never received major repairs or rehabilitation to meet newer building, electrical and other codes to ensure occupant and functional safety. Repairs to historic structures must, by law, use the existing historical components, such as the original doors, or replications, instead of new components. In addition, renovations often include recreating the construction techniques used during the original construction of the buildings to maintain the authenticity of the structures. Both of these conditions often add significantly to construction costs.

All repairs have been reviewed and approved by the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer and National Park Service officials at the Regional and Washington level. Maintaining these historic structures in accordance with the provisions of the National Register is consistent with the National Park Service's mission of protecting America's natural and cultural resources for generations to come. In addition, the rehabilitation of these historic existing structures will provide much-needed living space for park staff, while maintaining the architectural style of the structures present at the Park.

Current Status of Rehabilitation:

The National Park Service began condition assessments of the structures for repairs and rehabilitation for future occupancy several years ago. A 1998 housing assessment identified the need for two law enforcement rangers to reside in-park to provide after hour assistance to visitors and to provide for the security of all the park's resources. The condition assessments, completed in 2002, identified significant repairs were needed, such as:

- replace roofs, including lining of the canales
- replace antiquated and inefficient heating and cooling systems
- replace plumbing systems, including fresh water systems, drains, waste and water supply to structures
- replace kitchen and bath fixtures
- replace lighting fixtures
- install fire suppression system (sprinklers)
- install new floor coverings
- major repair of electrical system
- paint interior
- exterior stucco repair and re-coat

Funding was secured in 2004 for repairs, with the exception of plumbing, through the housing repair and rehabilitation program (for interior work), and the recreational fee demonstration program for historic exterior stucco repairs. The project, as currently designed, was estimated at \$468,535.

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This amount also includes design and oversight services by an NPS historic architect. Repair work began in May 2005. During the repair phase, the wood flooring in bedrooms of two residences were found to be suffering from extensive rot, and plumbing lines in all three residences were deemed unhealthy due to rust. The estimate to repair these problems totaled \$87,122

Additional funding was secured in September 2005 from housing repair and rehabilitation program. The total amount of repairs is \$555,657. Repairs are scheduled for completion in November 2005.

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